Israeli officials accuse: The PA, Wakf are inciting Palestinians to murder

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Israeli officials are accusing both the Palestinian Authority and the Wakf Islamic trust of incitement to violence and have called on Palestinian leadership to restore calm in the West Bank and Jerusalem.

“The biggest problem right now is the volume of incitement coming from the PA and numerous speakers in the Arab world and Israel,” Yesh Atid chairman Yair Lapid, a member of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, said in an Israel Project conference call on Saturday.

After [terrorists killed two Border Police officers](http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/BREAKING-Stabbing-attack-at-Lions-Gate-Jerusalem-499691) on July 14 and weapons were found on the Temple Mount, the police installed metal detectors at entrances to the holy site.

The placing of the metal detectors “did not come in a vacuum,” Lapid said, but as a “direct result” of the deadly attack carried out by three Muslims who were supposed to be on the Temple Mount to pray.

“The fact that people are pretending that putting in place metal detectors to save innocent lives is in some way an attack on Islam and freedom of prayer is terrible incitement that causes violence and death for no reason,” Lapid said, stressing that the incitement that comes from the PA and Wakf pretending there is an attack on the right of prayer and access to the Temple Mount, which is just “untrue.”

“Every country on earth would have done the same,” he said. “Are we not allowed to respond and protect ourselves? That is grotesque. Last week two Israeli officers, who were Druse, not even Jewish, were killed by people who brought weapons into a holy place. And instead of telling them that this is the wrong thing to do, they say that those who were killed are to blame, this is monstrous.”

MK Michael Oren, who is deputy minister for diplomacy in the Prime Minister’s Office, called on Palestinians to restore calm in the West Bank and Jerusalem.

“Israeli leadership has called on Palestinian leaders to return the calm. That is our expectation,” he said, adding that “the Wakf and other entities like Hamas have transformed the security measure into a religious issue. They have incited worshipers to riot violently.”

Oren said Friday night’s attack, in which terrorists killed three family members and wounded a fourth in their home in the Neveh Tzuf (Halamish) settlement near Ramallah, was caused by the false claims by the Wakf and other groups like Hamas that “the Jews” are trying to take over the Temple Mount.

The Halamish attacker, Oren said, “was motivated by reports that Israeli Jews killed Palestinian youth and women. It is part of ongoing and relentless delegitimization and incitement by Hamas and other Palestinian elements including the Palestinian Authority.”

Yossi Kuperwasser, the former director-general of the Strategic Affairs Ministry and former head of the research division in IDF Military Intelligence, also said that Friday’s attack was a “product of the ongoing incitement.”

“We see Abu Mazen [PA President Mahmoud Abbas] taking steps in order to further escalate the situation. What happened in Halamish is of course a direct result of that attitude,” he said, adding that “the false claims that ‘al-Aksa is in danger’ is used in order to incite and make people carry out these attack.”

On Friday night, Abbas said he was suspending all official contacts with Israel until the security measures recently placed on the Temple Mount complex are removed.

According to Kuperwasser, cutting contact with Israel is “going to be bad for the Palestinians, because they need cooperation. I don’t think they are doing us a favor by halting the connections with Israel. I hope it will not affect the security cooperation, but security cooperation too is most of all important for the Palestinians.”

Unconfirmed reports suggested that the decision would not include the cessation of security coordination with Israel.

Lapid called Abbas’s decision to sever contact with Israel “counterproductive” and said that while it is not clear if the PA president statements are “an empty declaration for internal purposes or something more tangible,” he did not believe that the security coordination would be stopped.

“It is in the PA’s best interest to continue the security coordination, it’s in everyone’s best interest for calm,” Lapid said, adding that “both parties need to sit down and figure out how to make sure no other innocent person is killed.”

The PA have halted security cooperation before, such as during the Second Intifada (2000-2005) that claimed the lives of 1,137 Israelis and 4,281 Palestinians. Since the current wave of Arab violence began in September 2015, PA security forces have stopped many attacks in the West Bank.

But, Oren said, even without the cooperation, “Israel has the means, ability and will to defend ourselves,” adding that while “it’s better with the Palestinians [‘helping], we can do it alone.”

Intelligence Services Minister Israel Katz said he would demand the death penalty for the terrorist who committed the attack at Sunday’s security cabinet meeting. While the death penalty has only been used in Israel for Nazi Adolf Eichmann, military courts are allowed to give that sentence, though never have. Katz said he would also demand the deportation of the head of the Northern Islamic Movement, Sheikh Raed Salah.

Opposition leader Isaac Herzog said all diplomatic and security means necessary should be used to stop the violence before it spreads to more places and drags “all of us into another circle of blood.”

His Zionist Union colleague, MK Tzipi Livni, called for immediate cooperation with the US, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority to calm the situation.

“The hearts of all of us are with the family,” Livni said.

“We are united in pain and the uncompromising struggle against terror,” Likud MK Nava Boker said the death penalty should be given to the terrorist who committed the attack, who she called a “despicable devil.”

Education Minister Naftali Bennett said, "there are no words to describe the horror," after visiting Halamish on Saturday night.

Bennett also stated that, "whoever encourages terror attacks, incites, pays monthly salaries to the families of terrorists, names plazas after the murderers of children, lies about Israel's intentions on Temple Mount, calls on hundreds of thousands of people to take to the streets - is directly responsible for this terror attack."